For Immediate Release: March 9 , 2011

Contact: LuAnn Canipe tel: (202) 225-3032 or 6089 / email: luann.canipe@mail.house.gov

---

Washington, D.C. - Rep. Brad Miller (NC-13) introduced the Energy Critical Elements Renewal Act of 2011, HR 952, this week in an effort to ensure a reliable and stable supply of energy critical elements vital to U.S. national security and economic interests. The issue of a shortage of rare earth elements, one subsection of the larger class of chemical elements, grabbed headlines last year as China temporarily cut off a supply of the elements to the United States, Japan, and the European Union.

The elements are crucial to products ranging from Apple's iPod to Boeing's smart bombs. They are also crucial for numerous advanced technologies, including missile guidance systems, petroleum refining, hybrid vehicles, solar panels and military electronics. China generates 97 percent of the world's rare earths supply and almost 100 percent of the related metal production.

"The Chinese have some different ideas about how to get the greatest benefit from this suddenly-valuable commodity beyond simply digging it up and selling for use in high-tech manufacturing," Rep. Miller said. "We must be able to compete in attracting and retaining manufacturing firms that need access to rare earth elements in light of China's current near monopoly, and their willingness to use their monopoly power to our disadvantage."

Currently the U.S. lacks the necessary technical expertise and extraction and production capabilities to ensure a reliable supply of energy critical elements (ECEs). Only one rare earth refinery has been built outside of China in nearly three years - currently one is being built in Malaysia.

The Miller bill would renew research and development on energy critical elements in order to more effectively use these elements, as well as direct the Secretary of Energy to promote collaboration and research opportunities in the fields of energy critical elements at higher institutions. It would also direct the Office of Science and Technology Policy to coordinate Federal agencies to promote a stable supply of ECEs and would authorize the Department of Energy to issue loan guarantees to companies with new processing and refining technologies to spur private investment.

###